

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 20 and 21, which are all of the pending claims, under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement and the written description requirements. None of the claims was rejected over the prior art.

Claims 20 and 21, both of which are independent claims, are being amended to better define the subject matters of these claims.

It is believed that these amendments fully address the rejections of claims 20 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. 112, and the Examiner is asked to reconsider and to withdraw these rejections of Claims 20 and 21 and to allow these claims.

In rejecting the claims under 35 U.S.C. 112, the Examiner objected to the descriptions in these claims of the way in which the approver list is recalculated to take into account delegation of the approval authority, when the name of one approver might be substituted for the name of another approver. The Examiner argued that the specification lacks sufficient detail for describing the aspect of substitution and thus that one of ordinary skill in the art would not be capable of making and/or using the claimed invention. The Examiner also argued that this feature is not supported by the original claims or specification, and is therefore considered new matter.

Applicants' Attorneys have carefully reviewed Claims 20 and 21, and the description of the way in which the approver list is recalculated is being changed to remove the express reference to substituting one name for another name, and to more closely track the specific language used in the specification.

For example, as presented herewith, both Claims 20 and 21 state that the list of approvers is recalculated “to take into account the current availability of the approvers further down in the list.” Support for this language is provided by paragraph (9) of the specification. Claim 20 goes on to indicate that the recalculating step takes into “account any delegates or new approver names that are further down in the list from the current approver.” Express support for this description is given by paragraph (22) of the specification. This paragraph expressly states the “when each approver approves a requisition, the approval list is recalculated, which takes into account any delegates or new approver names that are further down in the list from the current approver.”

Claim 21 describes the recalculating step as taking into “account any ...one of the approvers who delegated approval authority for [a] period of time, but resumed approval authority at the end of said time period, whereby said one of the approvers is pulled back onto the list.” Express support for this language is given in the specification at paragraph (26), which states:

“This [recalculation of the approver list] may be done, for example, to account for someone who delegated approval for a period of time, but resumes that authority at the end of that time period. With approval recalculation, the proper approver can be pulled back onto the list.”

Moreover, these paragraphs (9), (22) and (26) enable those of ordinary skill in the art to practice the above-quoted features of Claims 20 and 21. These portions of the specification teach those of ordinary skill in the art how to recalculate the list of approvers in the manner now described in Claims 20 and 21. In particular, these paragraphs of the specification enable one of ordinary skill in the art to take into account new names on the list, and also that the proper approver can be pulled back onto the list, after that approver temporarily delegated, and later resumed, approval authority.

For the reasons advanced above, the present specification provides the appropriate written description of and fully enables those of ordinary skill in the art to practice the claimed invention. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully asked to reconsider and to withdraw the rejections of Claims 20 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. 112.

In addition, the above-discussed feature of the present invention – that is, the way in which the approver list is recalculated – also patentably distinguishes Claims 20 and 21 over the prior art.

For instance, U.S. Patent No. 5,315,504 (Lemble), which was cited in a previous Office Action, describes a document approval system in which electronic facilities are used to review and approve documents. In this system, an approval path is computed, and displays are shown to a user to inform the user of, for example, the name of the previous approver.

U.S. Patent No. 6,712,921 (Altman), which has also been previously cited by the Examiner, discloses a method and system for generating workflow messages based on adding annotations to a file repository or database. The annotations are stored separately in a searchable annotation repository, and in this way, the original documents can be preserved

unchanged while still providing the ability to comment on the original document. In addition, the system keeps track of who has reviewed the documents.

Neither of these references, however, discloses or renders obvious the feature of recalculating a list of approvers either to take into account any delegation or new approver names that are further down in the list from the current approver (as described in Claim 20), or to take into account one of the approvers who delegated approval authority for a period of time, but resumed approval authority at the end of that time period, whereby that one approver is pulled back onto the list (as described in Claim 21).

This aspect of the present invention is of significant utility because it helps to avoid or reduce delays in case one of the initial approvers becomes absent or unavailable or new approvers are added to the list. With the instant invention, the absence or unavailability of an approver, or the addition of another approver do not need to delay the requisition approval process.

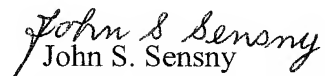
With the present invention, the list of approvers is recalculated each time one of the approvers approves the proposal. For example, if one approver needs to be absent for a period of time, that approver may delegate his or her approval authority to another person. With the present invention, the list of approvers is recalculated each time one of the approves the proposal, and this recalculation can be used to take into account delegation of approval authority or new names. As a result, for instance, the approval process does not have to wait to be completed until an absent approver returns.

The other references of record have been reviewed, and these other references, whether considered individually or in combination, also do not disclose or suggest this feature of this invention.

Because of the above-discussed differences between Claims 20 and 21 and the prior art, and because of the advantages associated with those differences, these claims 20 and 21 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable.

For the reasons set forth above, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and to withdraw the rejections of Claims 20 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. 112, and to allow these claims. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference with Applicants' Attorneys would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is asked to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,


John S. Sensny
Registration No. 28,757
Attorney for Applicants

SCULLY, SCOTT, MURPHY & PRESSER, P.C.
400 Garden City Plaza – Suite 300
Garden City, New York 11530
(516) 742-4343

JSS:jy